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Under afflictive

Dispensations of P R O V I D E N C E.

W I T H

A particular Reference to the Deaths of
near Relations and dear Friends.

By J. PARTINGTON, M.A.

L O N D O N :

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— *And Aaron held his peace.*

WE may all lay our account to meet with afflictions in the present life, nothing more sure: our sins deserve them, our state of trial makes them necessary, and when they prove the means of humbling us for sin, of weaning us from the world, of bringing us nearer to God, and making us more fit for heaven, they are of real advantage.

To know how to bear and well to improve the afflictive dispensations of Divine Providence, with which we may at any time be exercised: not to be insensible of our troubles, nor stupid under them on the one hand; nor too much disquieted and cast down by reason of them on the other; but always to keep the happy medium; to be sensible, but still humble, patient, submissive, and resigned to the will of our sovereign Lord, our heavenly Father, is not the least part of a Christian's work and duty, nor the least difficult.

This is a lesson which grace must teach us, many divine instructions, supports, and en-

couragements being necessary to our learning it aright, and putting it into practise.

Mention is made both in the old testament and the new of several eminent worthies, who were exemplary for their pious behaviour under sufferings: whose names are therefore set down in the sacred writings with marks of honour and respect, and whose memories will ever be had in veneration, by all who are truly wise and good. Of this number *Aaron* the priest of the Lord is one.

The occurrences of this day, which occasioned the text, were extraordinary: *Aaron* had two sons, *Nadab* and *Abihu*, just entered upon the priestly office; he saw them, and no question it was with pleasure, both dressed in their priestly robes, and going to the sanctuary with their censers in their hands, there to sacrifice to the Lord: affecting thought! and much more affecting, sight! he saw them well one moment, and both dead the next.

This so sore an affliction came upon *Aaron* all on a sudden, unlooked for, and unthought of, and utterly contrary to his expectation; little did he think the transactions of this day would end in so sorrowful
a man-

a manner ; and yet they had not that effect upon him they would have had upon some others : he did not faint under his troubles, speak evil of God, or rail at Providence, but held his peace.

Sometimes the passion of grief grows so unruly, that the exasperated mind casting off all government of reason, and despising all offers of consolation, resigns itself up so entirely into the hands of its distemper, as in despite both of reason and religion, to fly out indifferently against all the supposed authors of its troubles, not sparing even God himself. *Jonah* like, when our gourds are gone, we are but too apt to persist in an obstinate vindication of ourselves in our furious transports, raging against Heaven, calling its decrees unjust, and summoning the infinitely wise Disposer of all events, the great King of time and eternity, to give an account of his dealings with us at our own wretched tribunal. But not so *Aaron* ; tho' it's hard sometimes to bridle so vehement a passion as grief, especially in its first assault, yet no distempered word flew out of his mouth ; he did not curse his day, nor expostulate with God concerning the reasons of this severity. Nay, tho' he was a great mas-

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ter in oratory, and a man of such eloquence as to be recommended by *Moses* to God himself for his great ability in speaking, yet *Aaron* held his peace.

This is much. Yet some have observed the *Hebrew* word here used has more in it than the signification of a bare silence. It's the word that *Joshuah* made use of when he said to the sun, stay thou in Gibeon, and thou moon in the valley of Ajalon, Josh. x. 12. so *Aaron* stayed his grief: though affected very sensibly with his unexpected loss, thro' the tenderness of a father, and compassion for their youth, he did not entertain any hard thoughts of God, but stopped his passion in the beginning of its career, repressed its too eager motions, and not only held his tongue from speaking unlawfully, but also kept his heart from thinking any thing improper or unbecoming one in his circumstances.

What a peculiar excellency is there in religion where it appears in its life and power, how does it enlighten the several faculties of the soul, and compose the mind when troubles come?

Let us a little consider the circumstances of *Aaron's* calamity, and from thence lay
before

before you a narrow scheme of what might have been said, by such a person as he, upon such an occasion as this.

What ! might he say, two sons at once, and these my eldest, the sons of my youth, and the growing hopes of my family : these to be cut off in a moment, in so unusual a way as by fire from Heaven, in the sight of the people, in the beginning of their ministration, in the act of their sin, and before they had left any posterity to continue their names and memory upon the earth ? Was it requisite there should be so great a severity for so light a transgression ? The young men sinned not out of malice, but inadvertency, not out of presumption so much, as too much precipitancy, and must their eyes be closed up in death for this ? No respect had to the age or office of their Father ? Might not he have atoned for their sin who used to do it for the sins of the whole congregation ? Or how shall I myself dare to officiate in the sanctuary before that God who stands with such exactness upon the circumstances of his worship ? This and much more he might have said, and therefore the wonder is the greater that not a word of all this
broke

broke from him. In him patience had its perfect work. His heart was so full of a profound reverence of the Lord his great Maker, that when his griefs were fresh and most untractable, even then he calmed his soul, curbed his passion and bridled his tongue, which as it deserves our notice, so Almighty God hath been pleased to record it to the immortal honour of this eminent saint, as a commendation of him, and an invitation to us to aspire after the greatness of that example which he so highly approved in *Aaron*. *And Aaron held his peace.* Which words considered in their connection with the foregoing, will furnish us with the following doctrinal truth.

Proposition. It highly becomes the servants of God to submit with patience to the hand of their Master, even then, when he takes from them the nearest and dearest of their relations and friends. Not that I go about to lay violent hands upon nature, or seek to introduce a stoical apathy, or something worse than a brutish insensibility of our losses. I count it a happiness to live desired, and to die lamented: and moderate testimonies of our affections

to the departed, Christianity is so far from prohibiting, that it highly approves them. Our blessed Saviour wept over the tomb of *Lazarus*, his familiar acquaintance and friend, insomuch that the *Jews* said, *behold how he loved him*, John xi. 36. We may mourn, but not murmur, fetch a sigh, and shed a tear after a friend that's gone. When *Jacob* was buried at the threshing-floor of *Atad*, notice is taken, *that they mourned with a great and very sore lamentation, so that the inhabitants of the land said, this is a grievous mourning*, Gen. l. 10, 11. So when *Samuel* died, *all the Israelites were gathered together, and lamented and buried him*, 1 Sam. xxv. 1. They followed him to his interment, not as spectators but mourners, not out of curiosity or vanity, but with wet eyes, and sorrowful hearts. They attended him to his grave with tears, put him in, and left him there with minds full of concern for the loss of so valuable a life. When *Josiah* was dead *all Judah and Jerusalem mourned for him*, 2 Chron. xxxv. 24. When *Stephen* died, the first martyr we read of in the christian church, it is said, *devout men carried Stephen to his burial,*

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rial, and made great lamentation over him, Acts viii. 2. Solomon says it of all indefinitely, *Man goeth to his long home, and the mourners go about the streets*, Eccl. xii. 5. It is so when any man almost dies, and much more it should be so, when persons of great eminency and usefulness, persons of true excellency for piety towards God, and benevolence to mankind, are removed out of the world. It was none of King *Joash's* faults that he wept over the face of *Elisha*, and followed the dying prophet with that pathetick outcry, *O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel, and the horsemen thereof*, 2 Kings xiii. 14. And methinks there is a peculiar sweetness in the royal harp of *David*, even when he mournfully sings and celebrates the obsequies of his friend: teaching his harp to sigh out, *O Jonathan, thou wast slain in thy high places; and I am distressed for thee my brother Jonathan*.

God then has no where forbid us to shew kindness to the person and memory of our friend, whether living or dead. Nay, so far from this, that when useful persons die, he complains of the want of it as senselessness and stupidity; the righteous perisheth, or dies, and no man layeth it

to heart, and merciful men are taken away,
none considering that the righteous are taken
away from the evil to come, Isaiah lvii. 1.
 For a family that has lately had death,
 that most awful visitant in it, to remain
 unaffected, has something in it very unna-
 tural, and in most cases, so tenderly are
 the passions of the human mind formed,
 it's impossible. Can we be unmoved when
 we see a father or a mother, an husband
 or a wife, a brother or a sister, an inti-
 mate acquaintance or friend die? And can
 we think of them after they are dead with-
 out feeling some inward uneasiness, when
 we call to mind their former integrity,
 their dear love to us, and their interest
 with God on our behalf? I would not sup-
 pose we can.

Those must be very worthless lives in-
 deed, that have none to lament them at
 their funerals. That was a curse which
 God threatned to bring upon *Jeboiakim,*
that he should be thrown out, and none should
say, ah my brother, ah lord, or ah his glory,
Jerem. xxii. 18. It is an honour and a
 blessing on the other hand, to live beloved,
 and to die interested in the esteem and af-
 fection of all who knew us. A series of

virtuous and good actions is the only thing that can secure us this respect whilst we live, and endear our names and memories to those we leave behind us when we die. This is the life then we should all lead, as ever we desire to be happy at the last, and to find favour both of God and men in the day of our death. Should we not chuse so to live, as that when we die, we may rather be followed to our graves with unfeigned tears, than with just reproaches, may depart this world in such a manner as that those we have lived with and among may rather wish for us than be weary of us, and none may be able to open his mouth with any just sarcasm, and say, *behold how is the oppressor ceased!* In order to this it's necessary that we live well, that we do good, and endeavour to render ourselves as agreeable and useful in our place and station as we well can.

It is not then an insensible stupid frame and temper of mind under afflictions, that *Aaron's* silent submission is designed to commend; this is a conduct that can never be justified upon christian nor indeed upon any principles that are worth maintaining. But then we must be careful our sorrows rise

not too high, so as to astonish the mind, and overwhelm all the powers of the soul, by stopping up those avenues whereat humanity uses to give them vent, and making us act as if we had no supports and comforts left; there's something very immoral in our griefs when they so far exceed their proper bounds. We are allowed to mourn, but we must submit, we may tell down our tears at the hearse of our relations and friends, but not in such plenty as to drown our patience, and to hinder an humble resignation to the holy will of God: for let it be considered

Consideration I. It's the Lord has done it, and that's enough to quiet and compose a good man's heart. *Shall I not drink says our blessed Lord, of the cup that my Father hath given me to drink of?* John xviii.

II. To consider this or the other affliction, as sent from God, is a good step to our bearing it patiently, and improving it well. *I was dumb, says the pious psalmist, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it,* Psal. xxxix. 9. When the Christian's eye is up to God, his hand is presently upon his mouth, and he's far from murmuring or repining at what he has wisely done;

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I'm resigned, that's his language, because thou didst it. It's comfortable to think, when our friends die, they die by the appointment of Providence, that a wise, a holy, a just, a merciful and good God, in whose hands their times were, hath removed them out of the world. So good old *Eli*, tho' they were very sorrowful tidings that *Samuel* brought him, said, *It is the Lord, let him do to me as seemeth him good. The Lord gave, and the Lord hath taken away*, saith *Job*; and this being laid down in the premises, the conclusion must be, *blessed be the name of the Lord*, Job i. 21. God knows what is best for us and ours, better than we do ourselves; and none of his proceedings are chargeable with the least injustice towards any of his creatures, and they are always full of faithfulness and goodness to his own people; which brings me to add

Consideration II. God disposes of his own. Our relations are his creatures: his is of all others the best right to them, a much better as well as a prior to ours, and may he not do what he will with his own? We are his flock and the sheep of his pasture, and if he is pleased to appoint this or the other

other for death, a father or a friend, a wife or a child, who shall say unto him full of angry resentment, what dost thou? God's right to us is founded in creation, and redemption makes us more his own. Nay, his we are by all rights, and at whose dispose should we so much desire to be, as at that of a merciful God? who is the great disposer of all human affairs, and to whom belongs the distribution of the rewards of eternity. Those then are two considerations which should very much quiet and compose our minds when dear friends die. It is the Lord hath done it, and he disposeth of his own, as he gives or rather lends us this or the other comfort: It is but equal that he should when he pleases recall his own.

Consideration III. When death separates between us and our relations, nothing befalls us, but what is every day happening in the world. The apostle says it of temptations, *there is none befallen you but what is common to men*; and so may we say of other afflictions, of that in particular wherein death is concerned, this is nothing but what is common. The empire of death is no new thing amongst us: it's almost as old as the first man; and it's no news if it
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sometimes so fall out that we outlive those who are younger than ourselves, or that some of our friends step into eternity before us, who were in human view likely to have lived, and been blessings to the world when we were dead and gone out on't. We should therefore contentedly submit to receive our part in the common lot, and patiently undergo that which kings and prophets, patriarchs and apostles, wise and good men in all ages have had their share in, before it came to our turn. The mother of our Saviour beheld her Son's body nailed to the cross and dying, heard him cry out, *it is finished*, and probably saw him at the very time when every pulse grew weak and feeble, at last stood still and forgot its motion, when his head bowed and his soul departed. The prophet *Ezekiel* not only heard God say, *behold I take away from thee the desire of thine eyes with a stroke*, but saw the prediction presently after fulfilled in the event; for, says he, *so I spake unto the people in the morning, and at evening my wife died*, Ezek. xxiv. 16, 18. Death hath gained an universal empire over all the sons and daughters of *Adam*, and will reign till the final consummation of all things,

only

only two persons having been exempted from its stroke by a peculiar grant from heaven from the first man to the present day; so that when our relations, our friends, our neighbours, or we ourselves die, we are not to look upon it as if some strange thing had fallen out in the world.

Consideration IV. Our friends that die are not lost to us, only gone to the other world a little before us. They are our pledges who die first that we shall not be long after them. Though out of our sight at present, they are not perished: the good amongst them now speak to us in language like that of their Saviour's a little before he left his disciples, *Whither we are gone ye know, and the way ye know.* We may say it of those that sleep in Jesus, whom God will bring with him at his second coming, that tho' they are disrobed of flesh, and their earthly tabernacles be taken down, this shall be no hindrance to their readiness; but they shall be as perfectly prepared to meet the glorious bridegroom of the church, as those that shall be found alive, and never were undressed, when he comes to call all to an account. For, saith St. Paul, *this we say unto you by the word of the Lord,* and there cannot be a
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better testimony for the truth of any thing than the word of the Lord, *that we which are alive and remain unto the coming of the Lord shall not prevent them that are asleep. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, and we have all the reason in the world to believe this; even so them also that sleep in Jesus will God bring with him.* Their sacred dust shall rise again, and they shall *ascend and meet the Lord in the air*, at his kind awakening call, and *so shall ever be with the Lord, with which words comfort yourselves and one another*; so concludes the fourth chapter of the first Epistle to the *Thessalonians*. Death indeed will separate between the dearest friends, and those most nearly related, whose company was always agreeable each to other, and whose conversation was mutually entertaining and profitable. In such sorrowful circumstances it's comfortable to consider, that as the enjoyment was but short, so neither will the separation be; it's only for a time, it's not for ever. Our's and their souls, if true Christians, shall e're long meet together again, and add to the joyful numbers of the perfected Spirits of the just, and our Bodies too shall rise up together at the last day to a life of perfection that shall

never

never know another period or a second death. Which leads to fifth particular.

Consideration V. That we may be prevailed upon to acquiesce in the wise though afflictive dispensations of Providence. Think what a mercy it is to a good person when God will give him or her leave to die. *To me, says St. Paul, to live is Christ, and to die is gain; and in the same chapter, I desire to depart and to be with Christ, which is far better,* meaning, than to continue longer in this world, *Phil. i. 21, 23.* Which words do not only express to us the certain happiness of true Christians on the other side death, and the greatness of it, but the immediate enjoyment of it too. The soul does not sleep with the body till the resurrection, as some have imagined, nor is there any purgatory or intermediate state to detain holy souls in their way to heaven; but at death being made perfect in holiness, they do immediately pass into glory. Now what that glory is which they enter upon when their bodies die, and what will be their additional glory, when the body rises again, who can tell? How little is it that we know of the other world, and what poor imperfect notions do we form to ourselves of their

blessedness who dwell above ? We may raise
 our expectations high concerning it, and
 when we have done so, we have reason to
 conclude from what is said of it in the
 sacred oracles, the enjoyment will by far
 exceed all that we can conceive of it at
 present. *St. Paul* was wrapped up into the
 third heavens, and there he heard and saw
 things unutterable, and was so entranced,
 as that whether in the body or out of the
 body he could not tell. Were a messenger
 sent from the other world to acquaint the
 inhabitants of this with its happiness, I am
 persuaded he would either want words fully
 to express it, or if he found words we should
 want capacities fully to understand what those
 words meant.

Only consider what are the similitudes un-
 der which the Holy Ghost represents this
 blessed state to us. By a crown, a kingdom,
 an inheritance incorruptible, undefiled, and
 that fadeth not away, a building, an house
 not made with hands, a mansion, a tree of
 life, and by every thing that is excellent
 and desirable amongst men : no question
 the more to endear it to us ; yet these are
 but shadows of it, glory itself is what eye
 hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither hath

it ever entred into the heart of man fully to comprehend it. The Holy Spirit by these figures only consults the poverty and defects of our understandings. The glory of that kingdom and the riches of the inheritance of the Saints in light being greater than any similitude can exprefs. It is called fulness of joy, and everlasting pleasure, an unspeakable and eternal weight of glory.

The things that blemish this life are all absent there. Here sickness and sorrow, grief and tears, chequer all our lives with black, and either intermix with or succeed all our joys ; but there sorrow and sighing shall flee away, and all tears shall be wiped from our eyes. Here death swallows up all our hopes, cuts off all our purposes, and blends together all mankind in one confused heap of rottenness and corruption. But in those happy regions death is not so much as heard of or known. In a word, Heaven is the very best thing that Christ could desire of God for us, and all that he did and suffered upon our account ends in it. When he petitioned God in some of his last prayers, what was it that he desired but this? *Father, I will that those whom thou hast given me be with me where I am, that they*

they may behold my glory, John xvii. 24. To be like unto Christ, to see him, to live with and enjoy him, this includes all felicity.

To this glorious state or world our pious deceased relations and friends are gone. They are with God, and they see and enjoy that greatest and best of all Beings in heaven in such a delightful entertaining manner, as he is not seen, nor enjoyed any where else. They are now with Jesus, whose Name was ever dear to them, and whose example they endeavoured constantly to imitate, *whom, when Inhabitants of our world, having not seen they loved, in whom though they saw him not, yet believing, they rejoiced with joy unspeakable and full of glory.* They are where Jesus is, and have received from him the *end of their faith, even the salvation of their souls*, as it is expressed in the 1 Pet. i. 8, 9. Blessed Angels are their companions, and other Spirits like their own of just men made perfect, and with such company and such enjoyments they cannot be otherwise than happy. At the same time then that we bewail our own *dear loss* in those who are dead in the Lord, we may think of them with pleasure as enjoying a happiness

piness without intermission, without interruption, and that shall never end. Have we parted with those dear companions of life, who were early dedicated to God, who were afterwards religiously educated for God, who made religion early their choice, a choice which they never saw the least reason to repent of, and whose practice was an ornament to their profession ; all this bespeaks them now happy, and assures us that at the same time their bodies went to rest, their souls went to glory, agreeable to what the prophet has said, speaking of good men, *he shall enter into peace, i. e. his soul shall, they shall rest in their beds, or graves, i. e. their bodies shall, each one walking, or having walked in his uprightness.* Consider then how great a mercy it is to a good person when God will give him or her leave to die : and let that reconcile you to his wise and merciful disposal in removing them out of the world. Can there be a more powerful motive than this to a quiet submission ?

Consideration VI. By our patience and humble resignation to the will of God in such trials as I am speaking of, our proficiency in religion will much appear: hereby

by we shall do honour to God, and credit our holy profession. It was the Motto of the primitive Christians, *Non magna loquimur, sed vivimus* ; we speak not, but live great things. There's little of Christianity in talking, but much of it discernible in doing, and patiently suffering according to the will of God ; when we can accept of our punishment, submit to the rod, bear our losses, and justify God in all his dealings with us and ours : This is a sign that the precepts of Christianity have had their intended impressions upon our minds, and that we have made no small progress in Christ's school. This is one way in which the path of the just should shine more and more unto the perfect day.

I might, to what has been said, add several of the grand evils of impatience under afflictive Providences ; as, for instance, impatience makes us contradict our own prayers. We pray that the will of God may be done, *Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven* ; and yet we repine at it when it is done. We commit ourselves and ours to the wise disposal of Providence, saying with the Psalmist, *Thou art*
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our God, our times are in thine hands, and yet we would have all in our own. Now what is this but to dissemble with God?

Again : Impatience in parting with our friends betrays a mistrust of their welfare, when we have no reason to doubt of it, if they were truly good. When we refuse to be comforted because they are not, we do that which the Apostle forbid in the Christian church, *We mourn as those without hope*, as if the dead were perished, and as if their and our resurrection and immortality were no articles of our belief. How contrary is such a conduct to our profession as Christians? How much the reverse of what the Gospel recommends, wherein life and immortality are brought to light ? The resurrection of the body and the immortality of the soul, two of the most comfortable truths to a serious mind, being therein plainly revealed.

What is more, impatience doubles our sorrows and sufferings upon us. Patience is the best and only allay. It lightens that which it cannot remove ; whereas the more we struggle with the yoke, the more we gall our own necks by it.

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The child that opposes his due correction smarts the more for't, and occasions the indulgent Parent to give him stripes beyond his first intention, some for his fault, and some for his stubbornness. And thus our heavenly Father deals with us, our impatience is enough to provoke him to treat us with still greater severity. For these reasons impatience under sufferings is carefully to be avoided, as we value the favour of God, and the peace and quiet of our own minds, which is the chief pleasure any man can be possessed of in this world, and a resemblance of the happiness of Heaven.

These Considerations would I offer as so many arguments in proof of the proposition I laid down, that it highly becomes the servants of God to submit with patience to the hand of their Master, when he takes from them the nearest and dearest of their relations and friends. A few Inferences and I have done.

Application I. From what has been said, let us see the evil of sin and repent of it. It's this that ushered death into the world, with all the pains and sicknesses, and innumerable disorders that go before

or

or attend it, and all the evils that to the wicked part of mankind follow upon it. Had there been no sin in the world, there had been no death in it, nor sorrow of any kind, but friends had spent either an agreeable immortality together upon earth, or been translated to Heaven, as *Enoch* and *Elijah* were, without dying; we had had no funerals to attend, no houses of mourning to visit, no sorrowful submissions to make, no such trials of patience as we have now, had man kept his integrity. The evil of sin who can imagine? it hath not only made this world miserable, but hath constituted a region of pain and darkness. It should then be repented of and forsaken: otherwise it will as surely expose us to the second death as it now does to the first. Happy affliction, the fruit of which is the taking away of sin.

2. In every afflictive case let us see the hand of God, and be humbled under it: beware of an insensible or a stupid frame: some persons consider their own and others afflictions only as the common lot of mankind, without eyeing the Providence of God in them at all, or taking any notice of the ends for which they were sent,

which are to make them truly penitent for all they have done amiss, to wean them from all creature comforts and confidence, to make them more in love with God and the Redeemer, more devoted to the business of Religion, and of consequence more ready for a better world. We are not certainly, we are not to be insensible when troubles come, either of the troubles themselves or who sent them, but to see the rod and who hath appointed it, and to learn some useful Lessons from it.

3. Let us learn a patient submission to the will of God under the heaviest strokes of his Providence. This the text directs to; and it must be done in the way of faith and prayer; believing his perfections and promises, and relying upon his power, wisdom, goodness and faithfulness, that all necessary supports and comforts shall from time to time be given in; and that all things shall work together for good to those who love him. All this we may humbly expect in the way of our duty through the prevailing merits of our Blessed Saviour, who has purchased the Holy Spirit, the Comforter for us, and innumerable other blessings which he

he will certainly bestow on all who truly fear God, and hope in his mercy. Though one comfort be taken away, we have many left, and when all are removed, we have the God of all comfort to apply to, and rely upon. Happy those who have an interest in his favour, of all others they have the best right to peace, and if they understand themselves they will be patient under sufferings. *Though the fig-tree should not blossom, nor fruit be in the vine, though the labour of the olive should cease, and the field should yield no meat, though the herd should be cut off from the stall, and the sheep from the fold; that is, though all creature comforts should fail me, yet, says the Prophet, will I rejoice in the Lord, and joy in the God of my salvation, Hab. iii. 17, 18.* Nay, when our own flesh and heart fails, which will e're long be the case, if true Christians, we have still reason for comfort, because God will be the strength of our hearts and our portion for ever. In every afflictive case then the good man should with *Aaron hold his peace*; and with the *Psalmist say, I was dumb with silence,*

silence, I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it.

4. Let us prepare for that time when our Friends that survive us shall be called to the exercise of those graces upon our account, which we are frequently called upon to exercise for the sake of others, whilst in the present life: I mean, let us get ready for own afflictions, and our own deaths. Those who go to the house of mourning know not how soon they may have such an house of their own, and they know that the time will come that they shall make an house of mourning themselves. God Almighty only knows whose funeral may be next. Certain we are, that death is at no great distance from any of us, perhaps at the distance of a few years, or a few scores of years at most, which, alas, how short a time is it, and how soon will it be over? Let every funeral then we attend put us in mind of that time when the like solemnity shall be performed for us, when our friends shall follow us sorrowing to the grave, and leave what is left of us behind them there. Should not this thought put us
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upon a speedy securing an interest in a better life, especially if we consider at what uncertainties we now live? *What is your life*, says St. Paul, *it is even a vapour, a most inconstant thing, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away*; presently disappears, almost as soon as seen, and is seen no more; we none of us know where, in what world we may be to-morrow: a day, and much less time, may, for any thing we can tell, make strange alterations in our circumstances. The youngest and the strongest of us all may be as soon dead as the weakest, and those who are far gone in the decline of life. The most healthful may die before him, who has but a few more breaths to draw before he leaves the world. Sensible then of our own frailty and mortality, let us not dare to put off the great concerns of eternity any longer, but look after a well being in a better life, whilst we have a being in this. To conclude:

Think nothing too much you can do to make sure of an interest in that God who has it in his power to make you unspeakably

speakably more happy, or more miserable, than any other Being can, and in that world where all are happy to perfection. In whose enjoyment our pious deceased friends now dwell, partaking of fulness of joy, and everlasting pleasures. To which blessed state may the infinitely merciful and good God bring us all in his own time, for the sake of his dear Son, our only Saviour. *Amen.*

F I N I S.

